

Possible only by foot today, pioneers were forced to lower 80-odd wagons through the now famous Hole-in-the-Rock, located southwest of Escalante at the west rim of the Colorado River gorge.

Pioneers encountered

Hard Work At

Hole-In-Rock

by Penny Deason

HOLE-IN-THE-ROCK has more meaning than its name implies. Located southeast of Escalante at the west rim of the Colorado River gorge, it is a place of historical significance.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints called 200 members to found a colony in the Four Corners region and their journey to the San Juan was begun in December, 1879. After the company arrived at the last camping place before crossing the Colorado River exploring parties were sent out to see what lay ahead. The discovery was soon made that the party had been led into a trap, as deep snows had fallen on the mountains behind them and the next to impossible

descent without mishap, but nine were unable to keep their footing on the glassy rocks.

FOLLOWING considerable more work the first wagon began the descent through Hole-in-the-Rock. The wheels were locked and men, hanging back on a long rope, checked its speed until it had been guided around the turn below the cleft and headed for the dugways.

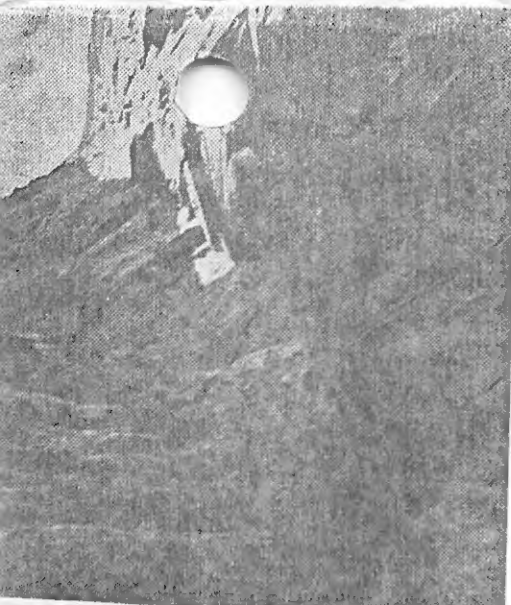
The wagon struck the built trail, bounced over the rocky barrier, gained momentum on the steep grade, and reached the bottom riding on the crest of a miniature landslide of its own making. By the time the last of the 80-odd wagons had made the descent, the roadway

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THE TRAIL they had built cannot be called a road by any present standards of highway construction. Leaving the plateau, it pitched directly toward the river through the famous Hole-in-the-Rock. Below this four-foot-cleft, blasted to a width sufficient to permit the passage of a wagon, was a turn into a long diagonal where the lavish use of powder had made a path across the face of the cliffs. At other points workers had constructed dugways, which were ruts dug so deep a wagon wheel, once in the slot, could not possibly get out.

After two weeks of hard work on the trail, an effort was made to move some of the horses down from the plateau to a bench above the Colorado. The majority of the animals made the treacherous

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The wagon struck the built trail, bounced over the rocky barrier, gained momentum on the steep grade, and reached the bottom riding on the crest of a miniature landslide of its own making. By the time the last of the 80-odd wagons had made the descent, the roadway was bare of loose rock as it had been before the work began.

Hole-in-the-Rock can now be reached by traveling Highway 89 from Salt Lake to about seven miles south of Panguitch where you turn east on Highway 12 to Highway 54 through Bryce Canyon and on to Escalante. From Escalante you travel southeast on a graded dirt county road. The road is accessible by car, although it may be a little rough in spots.

As for Hole-in-the-Rock itself, it is passable only by foot.

Discovering Utah

You can see and hear more about the interesting historical facts of the now famous Hole-in-the-Rock on "Discover Utah," Saturday noon on Channel 2, a special program sponsored by The Salt Lake Tribune in cooperation with KUTV.

